

USS Constellation



The USS Constellation depicted on the stamp, as the last Civil War-era naval vessel still afloat, was built at the Gosport Navy Yard (now the Norfolk, VA Naval Shipyard) and launched on August 26, 1854. The Constellation actively served the nation for nearly 100 years. Today the ship

is a floating museum anchored in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

The largest and last all-sail sloop-of-war built by the U.S. Navy, the USS Constellation carried 22 guns on one deck and a crew of nearly 300. Commissioned on July 28, 1855, the vessel was deployed to the

Mediterranean Sea, and later assigned

to interdict the slave trade off the west coast of Africa. During the Civil War, the Constellation was assigned to the Mediterranean and later to the Gulf of Mexico blockade.

For some twenty years after 1873, Constellation served as a training ship for Naval Academy midshipmen, and occasionally was used for other missions including transporting works of American art to the Paris Exposition of 1878 and food to Ireland during the 1880 famine. Over the next 50 years, Constellation would serve as a training ship, sit in dry dock, and participate in the 1914 Star Spangled Banner Centennial Tour. Its last appearance as a commissioned ship occurred during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 5, 1926.

Decommissioned by the Navy in 1933, Constellation returned to active duty during World War II as relief flagship for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Battleship Division Five. In 1955, having been decommissioned once again, the ship was brought to Baltimore and donated by the Navy to a local non-profit foundation. When finally opened to the public nearly a decade later, it had been configured to resemble its



namesake, the frigate Constellation.

In November 1996, Constellation was towed into dry dock to undergo extensive restoration. On July 2, 1999, the venerable all-sail ship, a National Historic Landmark now restored to its as-built (1854) configuration, returned to its permanent berth in Baltimore's Inner Harbor and re-opened its decks to the public.

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